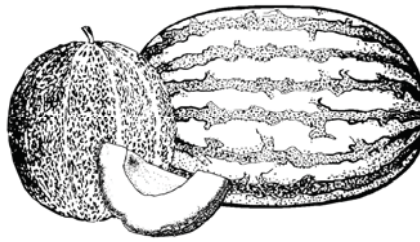


Summer Melons



Watermelon • Cantaloupe or Muskmelon • Honeydew • Others

Fun Facts: Summer melons are among the top five most-frequently eaten fruits in the U.S. Watermelon is 91% water. More than 100 different varieties of watermelons, with red, pink, orange or yellow flesh, with and without seeds, are grown. Watermelon seeds were brought to this country by Africans. Cantaloupe gets its name from the Italian city of Cantalupo, but is also known as muskmelon because it smells musky. It has been grown in the U.S. since the 1600s, while honeydew melon appeared in this country in the early 1900s.

Selecting Summer Melons:

- Avoid melons with bruised, soft, watery, pitted, shriveled, punctured, cracked or decayed rinds.
- **Watermelon:** Look for a symmetrical watermelon that is heavy for its size and has a hard smooth rind. Choose a melon with a firm yellowish or creamy underside – not white or pale green. It should have a dried stem and be fragrant and slightly soft at the blossom end. Look for firm, juicy, deep-colored flesh and dark seeds, if any. Avoid flesh with white streaks or a reddish-tan color, or that is either too dry or is watery. Thumping is not a reliable test for choosing watermelons. An unripe one may give a ringing metallic sound when thumped, while both mature and over-ripe mushy watermelons may give a dull thud.
- **Crenshaw melons** have a deep golden yellow, smooth rind and an oval shape.
- **Cantaloupe or muskmelons, and Persian melons:** When ripe, these melons have a sweet juicy orange flesh. Choose one with a tan or yellow, not green, rind and thick coarse netting. It should have a distinctive, sweet smell and yield to slight pressure at the blossom end. Look for one with a smooth depression at the stem end, with no remnants of stem remaining.
- **Honeydew melon:** Choose a symmetrical honeydew melon that is heavy for its size with a creamy yellow rind, a slightly soft blossom end, and a soft feel – not hard and smooth. Look for a melon with light green juicy flesh. Honeydews have only a faint fragrance.
- **Casaba melons** are large round melons with a bright yellow, ridged rind. They have creamy white flesh with a sweet juicy flavor, but little to no aroma.

Measuring Fresh Melons:

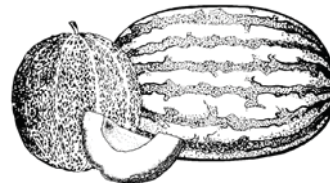
- a 6 inch diameter whole cantaloupe or muskmelon = about 3 pounds
- a 1 inch slice of a 6 inch diameter piece of watermelon = about 1 pound
- 1 pound of melon with rind = about 1 1/3 cups chopped, ready to eat melon
- 1/2 cup chopped ready to eat melon = about 3 ounces by weight = 80-85 grams

Handling, Ripening and Preserving Summer Melons: Melons do not sweeten after they have been removed from the vine, but will become softer and more mellow. Uncut melons can be stored longer if kept at room temperature rather than in the refrigerator. Store for 1 to 7 days, or if kept at 45 to 50° F., up to 2 to 3 weeks. Once cut, melons must be refrigerated. Cover cut melon pieces with plastic and store for 2 to 3 days in the fruit crisper drawer of a refrigerator, which is warmer than the rest of the refrigerator. Melons kept colder than about 40° F. may become discolored and have a disagreeable flavor. **To preserve melons,** place seeded melon chunks in a sweet mixture of 1/2 cup sugar per 1 cup water, place in a freezer container with 1/2 inch air space, seal, date and freeze. Thawed melon will be mushy, but is suitable for use in slushes or smoothies.

Preparing and Serving: For best flavor, chill summer melons before eating. Wash the dirt from the rind with water before putting it in the refrigerator. Before cutting, rinse the rind again under cold running water. Enjoy slices of raw melon still on the rind. Or scoop the flesh from the rind, mix with other cold foods, then add the mixture back to the hollowed-out rind for a festive, disposable serving bowl.

Summer Melon Nutrition Facts: Summer melons are low in calories and contribute healthful vitamins, minerals, pigments and antioxidants to the diet.

- **Watermelon:** One serving, or 1/2 cup chopped watermelon: Calories 25; Protein 0 grams; Carbohydrates 5 grams; Fat 0 grams. It is a good source of vitamin C and lycopene, a healthful phytochemical.
- **Cantaloupe or muskmelon:** One serving, or 1/2 cup chopped cantaloupe or muskmelon: Calories 30; Protein 1 gram; Carbohydrates 7 grams; Fat 0 grams. It is an excellent source of vitamin A (as beta-carotene) and vitamin C.
- **Honeydew melon:** One serving, or 1/2 cup chopped honeydew melon: Calories 30; Protein 0 gram; Carbohydrates 8 grams; Fat 0 grams. It is an excellent source of vitamin C.
- **Crenshaw and casaba melons:** One serving, or 1/2 cup chopped crenshaw or casaba melon: Calories 20; Protein 1 gram; Carbohydrates 5 grams; Fat 0 grams. It is an excellent source of vitamin C.



References: www.aboutproduce.com; www.urbanext.uiuc.edu; www.oznet.ksu.edu/library/hort2/mf661.pdf; ESHA Food Processor; www.oznet.ksu.edu/library/FNTR2/C648.PDF; Food for Fifty, 11th edition, 2001, by M. Molt, Prentice Hall; www.fda.gov/fdac/special/foodlabel/raw.html

Prepared by Mary Meck Higgins, Ph.D., R.D., L.D., CDE, Assistant Professor, Department of Human Nutrition. July 2003.
Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service, Manhattan, Kansas.
Contents of this publication may be reproduced for educational purposes. All other rights reserved. For more information about healthy eating, contact your local extension office. Kansas State University is an equal opportunity provider & employer. This material was funded by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. **The Food Assistance Program can help people of all ages with low income buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more, call 1-888-369-4777.** 21